

Inside

Reader feedback

"I want all of our Soldiers to come home safely to their families," said Carmen Garnes in this week's reader survey on hopes for the new year. See page 2 for more.



Big winner
Baumholder's Staff Sgt. James Masisak walked away from Burger King \$25,000 richer. See page 10 for the story.



Wiesbaden museum

The Landesmuseum in Wiesbaden offers visitors several hours of exploring the natural world and special exhibits. See page 28.



Herald Union



Vol. XI, No. 7

Serving the military communities of the 104th Area Support Group

Jan. 20, 2004

Hundreds pay tribute to Friedberg CSM

Memorial service for Soldier killed in Iraq

By Karl Weisel
104th Area Support Group Public Affairs Office

They say the measures of a person's life are the people he or she touches in the course of a lifetime.

Judging by the hundreds of German and American Soldiers, dignitaries and friends who came from places near and far to pay their respects Jan. 3 in Friedberg, Command Sgt. Maj. Eric F. Cooke left a legacy that will long be remembered.

Cooke, command sergeant major of 1st Armored Division's 1st Brigade, was killed Dec. 24 when his vehicle struck an explosive device north of Baghdad in Iraq.

The brigade's senior NCO was remembered as a leader who re-

fused to sit behind a desk and who consistently put himself in harm's way to take care of "his" Soldiers. Close to 400 people filled Ray Barracks' Old Ironsides Theater seats and aisles Saturday afternoon during the memorial ceremony which featured inspirational music, speakers and a slide presentation.

"He was the finest noncommissioned officer with whom I've ever had the pleasure to serve," said Col. Peter Mansoor, 1st Brigade commander, describing Cooke as a "caring and compassionate leader" who "set the standard" and "worked ceaselessly to ensure Soldiers had what they needed to get the job done."

"Command Sgt. Maj. Cooke taught me that taking care of Sol-

See Tribute on page 4



Photo by Karl Weisel

Soldiers render honors to the memory of Command Sgt. Maj. Eric F. Cooke during a ceremony on Friedberg's Ray Barracks Jan. 3.



Photo courtesy of 77th Maintenance Company

Soldiers of the 3rd Corps Support Command prepare to move out while on duty in Iraq.

Looking back on Iraq

77th Maintenance Soldiers share experiences

By David Ruderman
104th Area Support Group Public Affairs Office

They were strafed, mortared and blown out of trucks while guarding bases and traveling the roads of Iraq. After 10 months on the front lines of Operation Iraqi Freedom

members of the 77th Maintenance Company had some stories to tell.

The Hanau- and Babenhause-based unit redeployed to Germany in late November.

Following a couple of weeks of reintegration briefings, decent food, regular showers and plenty

of sleep, Soldiers took some time to talk about their experiences.

"It's not everything you pictured. You wouldn't picture going off to combat as early as we did, as I did," said Pfc. Jason Green, 21, of

See Looking back on Iraq on pages 14 and 15

Security: Safeguarding information more important than ever

Whether one calls it force protection, neighborhood watch or simply helping prevent crime, everyone plays a vital role. Being constantly aware of one's surroundings, reporting suspicious behavior immediately and safeguarding information all help make it much more difficult for terrorists or criminals to cause harm.

"The bad guys are out there and they are targeting you," said Fred Proctor, 104th Area Support Group S-2/3 security manager.

"When I refer to bad guys I am talking about anyone from the petty thief to the terrorist bent on killing thousands of innocent people."

Ensuring that personal and critical information doesn't fall into the wrong hands is everyone's job, said Proctor. "What do all these bad guys have in common? They need information to accomplish their mission. Studies have revealed that the most effective way to gather information is to recover it from what we throw into the waste

bin," he said, adding that being careless with personal information can lead to identity theft.

"Identity theft occurs when someone uses your personal information such as your name, Social Security number, credit card number or other identifying information, without your permission, to commit fraud or other crimes," Proctor said. "People whose identities have been stolen can spend months or years — and their hard-

See Security on page 3

Commentary

Feedback: What are your hopes for the new year?



Myrna Calderon
Hainerberg Elementary School secretary

"I hope that our troops will come back safely and we can go back to normal here in Wiesbaden."



Maj. Kevin Findley
Defense Energy Support Center Europe

"I'd like to see a peaceful turnover of the coalition government in June. I'm a Cub master for Pack 13 and I'd like to see a lot of the parents come home."



Spc Charles Watkins
Company C, 1st Battalion,
36th Infantry Regiment

"I hope that my kids will grow up in peace, never having to experience war as I did."



Luz Medeiros
284th Base Support Battalion Safe Neighborhood Awareness Program coordinator

"First of all I hope there will be no more wars and that my husband and all of the other Soldiers will return very, very fast. I also hope that all the spouses realize we all need to bond and take care of each other to make it through a deployment. I also hope that all people find their way to God and have trust in his power."



Air Force Staff Sgt. Alfi Cintron
485th Intelligence Squadron

"My hopes are that I can take better care of my family, be able to travel around a little more. We're hoping for this year to see Prague in the Czech Republic and Spain."

Coming home

USAREUR ready for redeployment

By Gen. B.B. Bell
U.S. Army Europe commander



Over the past year thousands of U.S. Army Europe Soldiers have been in continuous operations in Iraq. They have served valiantly while contributing mightily to the successful campaign to remove a dangerous and ruthless dictator from power, while giving the Iraqi people an opportunity for freedom and representative government. These Soldiers are now postured to return home to USAREUR. The Redeployment, Reintegration (human dimension), Reconstitution (equipment repair), and Retraining (war winning readiness) (R4) of these forces returning from Operation Iraqi Freedom will be accomplished in a deliberate and professional manner.

USAREUR has been working hard preparing for R4. Our rear detachments, medical support personnel, schools and communities are all ready to start receiving forces as they return. Everyone in USAREUR will be a major player as we welcome home our heroes. The movement of troops has risks, and I expect everyone to be vigilant to minimize those risks.

As OIF 1 transitions to OIF 2 we must ensure that redeploying Soldiers re-energize their fighting spirit, nurture the emotional and spiritual health of themselves and their families, and return their equipment and training to a state of readiness for future operations.

Letter to the editor

Soldiers get packages in Iraq

On behalf of the 2-501st Aviation Regiment, we want to say thank you to all of you. We would like to thank you for the boxes sent here. It's not everyday we Soldiers in Iraq get boxes of goodies and much love inside. The fun-filled games that were wrapped and the cookies and crackers were all a surprise and much enjoyed by all of us. Here it was Christmastime and a lot of faces were glowing with the sight of all the goodies and the cute little Christmas decorations added into the box. We want to mention how sweet the cards were. As we read them they brought happy tears to our eyes, knowing that people we do not know are thinking of us on this unforgettable Christmas 2003. I just cannot express enough how happy and glad we are to have

tions. This is a step-by-step process. This "Bell Sends" focuses on the first 45 days following a battalion's return to Europe — the reintegration of the Soldier to the European environment, tending to the Soldier's personal and emotional needs, and, as applicable, the reunion process for the family.

Soldiers, civilians and families of redeploying personnel should begin the reintegration process about 30 days before the unit heads home. Every Soldier, civilian and family member will receive a "Soldiers, Civilians & Family Members' Reintegration Guide" before the return. This guide (also located electronically on the USAREUR home page) is specifically tailored to provide information to help each Soldier and family member through the R4 process. Before returning to their European garrisons Soldiers and civilians will be moved to rear-assembly areas to begin the journey home. They will receive briefings, initiate personnel and financial actions, and begin the process of preparing themselves for their trip home — physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually.

In Europe reintegration activities constitute a 45-day period for each battalion beginning with the unit's arrival in USAREUR. After a spirited welcome into their communities Soldiers will begin a mandatory seven half-day program of instruction. Whether single Soldiers or Soldiers with families, this period is intended to bring our Soldiers back into our communities deliberately and gradually. Things change in a year: Children grow, neighbors move, new friends must be made

See Coming home on page 4

had you all take the time out of your lives to thank us for doing our job. Continue to keep all of us Soldiers and our families in each of your prayers and wish for us a safe and early return home next year. We are far from being safe out here, and far from saying that this is all over. God bless you all and have a happy New Year.

Soldiers of 2-501st Aviation Regiment
Editor's note: The letter was sent in response to a package drive for Hanau-based Soldiers serving in Iraq organized by the 414th Base Support Battalion Army Community Service on the first weekend in December. People from the local German community brought 64 packages which were mailed downrange and distributed to Soldiers through their chaplains.

Herald Union

The *Herald Union* is an authorized unofficial Army newspaper published under the provisions of AR 360-1 for members of the 104th Area Support Group. Contents of the *Herald Union* are not necessarily the official views of, nor endorsed by, the U.S. government or the Department of Defense. The editorial content is the responsibility of the 104th Area Support Group Public Affairs Office. No payment will be made for contributions. This is a biweekly publication printed by *The Stars and Stripes* in Griesheim, Germany. Our office is in Building 1205 on Hanau's Yorkhof Kaserne. Circulation is 13,000 copies. For advertising rates contact Sean Adams at civ (06155) 601-203, mil 349-8203 or adamss@mail.estripes.osd.mil.

Commander 104th Area Support Group

Col. George A. Latham II

104th ASG Command Sergeant Major

CSM Jose A. Fontanez

104th ASG Public Affairs Officer

Raino Scharck

Newspaper staff

Editor.....Karl Weisel
Associate Editor.....David Ruderman
221st BSB Reporter.....Cassandra Kardeke (mil 337-5772)
222nd BSB Reporter.....Ignacio Rubalcava (mil 485-6191)
284th BSB Reporter.....Alexandra Williams (mil 343-6597)
414th BSB Reporter.....Dennis Johnson (mil 322-1600)

Address: 104th ASG, Herald Union, Unit 20193 Box 0001, APO AE 09165-0001; or, Herald Union, Yorkhof Kaserne, Bldg. 1205, Chemnitz Str. 2-4, 63452 Hanau. Telephone: mil 323-3257, civ (06181) 180-3257. Email: hesherald@104asgexch.hanau.army.mil. Home page: www.104thasg.hanau.army.mil. Fax: civ (06181) 14029.

News and features

News flash

Reduced clinical services

The 104th Area Support Group Army Substance Abuse Program will operate at reduced clinical services levels due to staff training Jan. 26-30. Commanders should send Soldiers needing substance abuse treatment to the ASAP program as usual for appointments. Soldiers requiring emergency treatment can be sent directly to the community health clinic for treatment. The urinalysis testing program will not be affected by the reduction of services. Full services will resume at all locations on Feb. 2. Call mil 323-2353 for more information.

Central Issue Facilities closing

All Central Issue Facilities in the 104th Area Support Group will be closed Jan. 26-30 for inventory. The facilities will only handle emergencies during that period. For more information call Mrs. Neal in Baumholder at mil 485-7470, Mr. Smith in Hanau at mil 322-8159, Mr. Newman in Giessen at mil 343-8031 or Mr. Diaz in Wiesbaden at mil 337-5183.

Online technology courses

The Army offers computer-based training for Soldiers and Department of Defense civilians. The Skill Soft program offers about 1,500 free courses. More than 60 of the courses can be completed for certification as a Microsoft certified systems engineer, or in such operating systems as Cisco or Oracle. Soldiers can earn college credits and promotion points. To register users must have an Army Knowledge Online account. Once an AKO account is obtained, users can register for training at <https://www.atrrs.army.mil/channels/eLearning/smartforce>. (Courtesy of the Stars and Stripes)

Iraq casualties

Spc. Christopher J. Holland, age 26, of Brunswick, Ga., and Baumholder's Battery A, 4th Battalion, 27th Field Artillery Regiment, was killed Dec. 17 in Baghdad when his unit was ambushed with small arms fire.

1st Lt. Edward M. Saltz, age 27, of Bigfork, Mont., and **Pfc. Stuart W. Moore**, age 21, of Livingston, Texas, were killed Dec. 22 in Baghdad when an improvised explosive device struck their convoy. Both Soldiers were assigned to Giessen's 2nd Battalion, 3rd Field Artillery Regiment. (DoDNews)

EO moves to Hutier

The 104th Area Support Group's Equal Opportunity Office has moved to Hanau's Hutier Kaserne, Building 1106, Room 205. Their new telephone numbers are mil 323-2012, EO Hotline mil 323-2029 or fax mil 323-2014.



'Leaders' Rest' dedicated to memory of fallen Iron Soldier

By Spc. Chad D. Wilkerson
372nd Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

Freedom Rest, the U.S. Army's designated location for troop rest and recuperation in Baghdad, opened a new addition last month.

Several Task Force 1st Armored Division brigade and battalion command leadership teams joined Brig. Gen. Martin E. Dempsey, 1st Armored Division commander, and Lt. Gen. Ricardo Sanchez, CJTF-7 commander, for the opening and dedication of the new facility.

The building was dedicated to the memory of Pvt. 2 Jonathan Falaniko, son of Command Sgt. Maj. Ioakimo Falaniko, 1st Armored Division's engineer brigade command sergeant major.

Pvt. 2 Falaniko was killed in Baghdad by an improvised explosive device attack.

When Leaders' Rest was nearly ready for opening, Dempsey and Brig. Gen. Mark Hertling, deputy division commander for support, collaborated to put together a surprise for Falaniko by naming the building "PV2 Falaniko Inn," said Sgt. Maj. Edward Faust, division personnel sergeant major.

"We wanted to show (Command) Sgt. Maj. Falaniko how much the division appreciates him and the kind of Soldier he is. We appreciate the sacrifice that he and his son have made here," said Faust.

Falaniko was not told that the opening ceremony would include a dedication. He said he was honored by his comrades' gesture of gratitude and sympathy.

"The dedication of this facility to my son is a total surprise," he said. "It reminds me how proud I am of my son and makes me



Photo by Spc. Chad D. Wilkerson

Maj. Edward Faust, 1st Armored Division's personnel sergeant major, embraces Command Sgt. Maj. Ioakimo Falaniko, 1st Armored Division's Engineer Brigade command sergeant major, at the dedication ceremony for the Baghdad facility named in honor of Falaniko's son.

proud of the division and what we do."

Faust said the idea behind "Leaders' Rest" is to allow for separation between high-ranking and low-ranking Soldiers during their rest and relaxation time off.

"Leaders' Rest is for general officers, brigade and battalion command teams," Faust said. "In order for Soldiers to relax, they need to be away from the military environment. This facility will allow leaders to get away from the Soldiers they are in charge of as well as allowing those Soldiers some space from

their leaders."

Falaniko said he hoped his son's memory will help the military leaders in Baghdad remember what they and their Soldiers are fighting for.

"When leaders come through that door and see my son's name, they are going to be reminded of those Soldiers out there making the ultimate sacrifice to bring peace and hope to the people of Iraq," said Falaniko. "Maybe it can reinforce our focus on why we are here, and help us carry on the fight."

Tax statements available online

Tax statements are now posted on the myPay website, <https://mypay.dfas.mil>, for Army, Navy, Air Force, Reserve, Department of Defense and Department of Energy civilian

employees, military annuitants and military retirees.

W-2 and 1099 statements are available for these groups to view and print immediately.

For assistance call the myPay customer support telephone line at civ 1-800-390-2348. (Defense Finance and Accounting Service Release)

Security

Continued from page 1

earned money — cleaning up the mess thieves have made of their good name and credit record. In the meantime victims may lose job opportunities, can be refused loans, education, housing or cars, or even get arrested for crimes they didn't commit."

Terrorists can use recklessly discarded information to plan an attack. "Simple data that passes through your hands during the duty day, which may seem insignificant to you, when pieced together with other sources of information, can provide the adversary with a good picture of our mission or ongoing operations," said Proctor. "Simple information such as unit movements, VIP schedules and even plans for large events are just the type of information we do not want to fall into enemy hands."

Shredding all paper waste both at home and in the work place is recommended, he

said. "Using a cross-cut shredder is the preferred method for destroying paper waste. When disposing of the shredder waste it is recommended to spread it about the dumpster directly, instead of 'packaging' it up for the adversary to put back together like a jigsaw puzzle. Remember that operations security is a practice that should not only be used in the work place but at home as well," he added.

People who think their identity may have been stolen should take the following steps, said Proctor:

- * Contact the fraud departments of any one of the three major credit bureaus to place a fraud alert on your credit file. The fraud alert requests creditors to contact you before opening any new accounts or making any changes to your existing accounts. As soon as the credit bureau confirms your fraud alert, the other two credit bureaus will be automatically notified to place fraud alerts, and all

three credit reports will be sent to you free of charge.

- * Close the accounts that you know or believe have been tampered with or opened fraudulently. Use the ID theft affidavit when disputing new unauthorized accounts.

- * File a police report. Get a copy of the report to submit to your creditors and others who may require proof of the crime.

- * File your complaint with the Federal Trade Commission. The FTC maintains a database of identity theft cases used by law enforcement agencies for investigations. Filing a complaint also helps security experts learn more about identity theft and the problems victims face to help prevent future crimes from occurring. (Editor's note: This is the first in a series of articles in the Herald Union which will address the issues of force protection, operations security and crime prevention.)

News and features

Help save lives — give blood

During National Volunteer Blood Donor Month everyone is asked to help save lives by donating blood. Because most of the blood used by U.S. forces in Europe comes from the United States, the U.S. Army Europe Blood Donor Center in Landstuhl relies on local donations for the “freshest” blood, said Capt. Angel F. Colon, USAREUR Blood Donor Center chief. “We use that for the downrange folks,” said Colon. With the demand for blood supplies caused by the Iraq conflict, donations are critical. Upcoming blood drives include Jan. 21 at Kapaun Air Station and Jan. 27 at Sembach Air Base. For details about upcoming drives and donor restrictions call the donor center at mil 486-7107 or 6497. (Landstuhl Regional Public Affairs Office)

Photo by Karl Weisel



News flash

FRGs for all

Family Readiness Groups are open to everyone — financers, boy/girlfriends, retirees, DA civilians and interested community members. “FRGs provide information, assistance and communication regarding deployments. They also offer a supportive environment where individuals in similar circumstances can get together,” said Brig. Gen. Russell L. Frutiger, U.S. Army Europe’s deputy chief of staff for personnel. “We invite anyone who is concerned with a deployed Soldier or civilian to get involved in his or her local FRG.” To get in touch with FRGs in the 104th Area Support Group call mil 323-3451, in Wiesbaden call mil 337-5754, Giessen/Friedberg call mil 343-7618/324-3465, Baumholder call mil 485-7196/8188, Hanau call mil 322-8828 or Dexheim call mil 334-5622. (USAREUR Public Affairs)

Haus Rissen

Space is available now for U.S. field-grade officers and equivalent-grade civilians to attend the next Haus Rissen seminar Feb. 1-6 in Hamburg. The next of eight seminars will be held March 7-12 for company-grade officers. Speakers include German university teachers, journalists, senior military officers and academic staff members of Haus Rissen, a private, international institute for politics and economics. Attendees learn about the political structure and history of Germany, the German education system, about the German armed forces, the European Union and more. Call Michael Beldermann at the Installation Management Agency-Europe Public Affairs Office, mil 370-8725, or email beldermannm@ima-e.army.mil if interested.

VA briefings

A representative from the Department of Veterans Affairs will provide information on a wide variety of veteran’s benefits during two-hour briefings at the following locations: **Baumholder** Feb. 18, March 16, April 27, June 8, July 12 and Aug. 23; **Giessen** March 4, April 7, May 20, June 4, July 22, Aug. 13; **Hanau** March 2, April 5, May 18, June 1, June 22, July 20, Aug. 10, Sept. 8; **Wiesbaden** Jan. 21, March 3, April 6, May 19, June 3, June 24, July 21, Aug. 12 and Sept. 9. Call your local Army Career and Alumni Program center for start times and locations.

Coming home

Continued from page 2
and life experiences on both sides of the world change us as human beings.

Soldiers, families, friends and units will need time to become accustomed to changes after long separations. Everyone will need time to relax and learn how to live and work as a team in their community, as well as be reintroduced to their families and friends. Single or unaccompanied Soldiers residing alone may feel a void as their comrades return to their families.

Each community has prepared a Single Soldier Focus Activity Program, which offers such things as free movies, bowling and snack coupons so unaccompanied Soldiers can enjoy their downtime with friends. Moving from the Iraqi theater of operations to a European climate will also be different, and Soldiers may need to acclimate to freezing rain, snow and ice. Driving skills and on-road experiences need to be reviewed. Many returning Soldiers may have deployed to Iraq shortly after arriving in Europe,

without having much opportunity to drive or to get a USAREUR drivers license. Soldiers will be thinking of getting home, driving and, in some cases, just having a beverage with friends. This is all very understandable and natural.

Commanders, Soldiers and family members therefore need to be aware that enjoyment can turn into tragedy if things get out of hand. Be ready to react properly and support the reintegration in a positive and professional way.

After Soldiers (with families encouraged to attend selected periods of instruction) have had their seven half-days of mandatory instruction, commanders will release their units for block leave. Block leave gives each redeploying Soldier in the unit an opportunity to take up to 30 days continuous leave. The seven half-day program of instruction and the 30-day block leave will be executed in the first 45 days following the return of the unit. During this 45-day period no equipment maintenance or MOS/unit training will be executed. This 45

days is reserved for Soldier and family wellness.

We have coordinated with the Armed Forces Recreation Center in Garmisch to offer a special vacation package for redeploying Soldiers, civilians and their families. This package, a companion to our R&R vacation package, offers a great vacation for a super price and is available on a first come, first served basis.

We also understand that returning Soldiers will want to spend focused time with their children. Department of Defense Dependents Schools are prepared to release children for selected periods to spend time with their families during block leave, but families must coordinate this directly with their schools. Employers of spouses of returning Soldiers and civilians have also been encouraged to coordinate closely with personnel requesting time off and make every effort to grant leave.

Before completion of the Reintegration process (first 45 days following a battalion’s return from OIF which includes block leave), I want

to re-emphasize that Soldiers will not conduct any equipment recovery, maintenance or MOS/unit training. The Reintegration period is to focus on the human dimension and be used exclusively for positive reinforcing activities for single Soldiers and Soldiers with their families.

This is a joyous time for our returning Soldiers and their families here in the Army in Europe. They are returning as heroes to a grateful Army and nation. But our participation in the Global War on Terrorism is not over. Over the next several months we will move other units forward into the Iraqi theater of operations. Many families will be reuniting while others are gearing up for the departure of their Soldiers for up to a year’s operations in OIF.

These are times that will test how well the Army family takes care of its own. With the support and commitment of Soldiers, family members, leaders, civilians and members of our great military communities, I have no doubt that this mission is also one that we will execute with excellence.

Tribute

Continued from page 1
diers was the most important mission,” said Sgt. Calvin Williams of Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 1st Brigade. “As I got to know him in Baghdad, I found out that he believed that every NCO had the potential to become like him. It was the standard he set.”

“He was always with his men, and he died as he lived—being a Soldier’s Soldier,” said 1st Sgt. David Henry, of Büdingen’s 1st Squadron, 1st Cavalry Regiment. “He was an anchor. He was always mentoring and building tomorrow’s Army.”

Henry, who served with the command sergeant major when he was the senior noncommissioned officer with 1-1st Cavalry in Büdingen, said Cooke and his wife, Dagmar, “cared for more Soldiers and their families



Photo by Karl Weisel

A fellow Soldier renders honors to the memory of Command Sgt. Maj. Eric F. Cooke during a ceremony on Friedberg’s Ray Barracks Jan. 3.

than anyone I’ve seen in my career in the Army. . . . He’ll be truly missed by all here today and those serving their country in Iraq.”

Command Sgt. Maj. Mark Schindler, 1st Battalion, 37th Armor Regiment, began his tribute to the 43-year-old NCO by reciting the NCO Creed. “CSM Cooke is the type of NCO this creed applies to or it could have been written about,” Schindler said, adding, “He is one of the best men I’ve ever met. . . . He was a man whose guidance and wisdom were trusted completely.

“You could not help but be touched by him,” added Schindler, describing the 25-year Army veteran as a leader who truly cared about what was best for his Soldiers, his unit, his family and

friends. “He would say, ‘If someone is going to be hurt, I’d rather it be me.’”

“He lives on in our spirit and actions,” Schindler said.

“Command Sgt. Maj. Cooke was a friend, a colleague and in some ways a mentor,” said Chaplain (Maj.) Bryan Walker. The Army chaplain told those assembled how his personal relationship with Cooke helped him “be a better chaplain, a better officer” and a “better person.” Cooke’s life and work was an inspiration for others to live their lives with “integrity, courage and conviction,” he said.

Cooke, of Scottsdale, Ariz., was buried in Arlington National Cemetery Jan. 5. He was posthumously awarded the Bronze Star Medal, Legion of Merit and Purple Heart.

Husband, wife mark promotion in Iraq

Baghdad ceremony honors Soldiers' rise to chief warrant officer 3 rank

Story and photo by Spc.
Jeanine Kinville
1st Armored Division Public
Affairs Office

New Year's Day was a memorable holiday for Soldiers at Baghdad International Airport, especially for a married couple reunited for their joint promotion to chief warrant officer 3.

Sharon Gibbs was joined by her husband Cecil for their advancement Jan. 1.

Sharon, 1st Armored Division's chief of strength management, is stationed at BIAP. Cecil is the chief of supply maintenance for 19th Support Center, 3rd Corps Support Command, in Camp Doha, Kuwait.

"I could not have asked for anything better," said Sharon, who

found out they had made the selection list together for chief warrant officer 3 on Dec. 11.

"It's a blessing to be promoted together," said Cecil.

The couple met at Warrant Officer Candidate School at Fort Rucker, Ala. They were married in Virginia in December 1999.

Cecil deployed to Kuwait in February 2003 and Sharon entered Iraq three months later.

"I didn't want her to come here because I was concerned with her welfare," said Cecil. "Now I am glad she came and things worked out."

The couple has made the most of being in Operation Iraqi Freedom by seeing each other every chance they get, with the help of their commands.

Cecil flew up to Baghdad to celebrate their wedding anniversary on Dec. 29. Sharon recently spent her Rest and Recuperation leave at Camp Doha with her husband.

"We didn't think we would see each other," said Sharon. "I think the deployment has strengthened our marriage a lot."

The longest the couple has been physically together since their wedding day is seven months. Before deploying they served together at Wiesbaden Army Airfield.

"Sometimes it is hard because of long work hours and being apart," said Sharon. "But I feel our careers and being Soldiers have been better since we have each other."

"It's great," said Cecil on being a dual military couple. "My advice is to trust in God and everything else will fall in place."



Photo by Spc. Jeanine Kinville

Cecil and Sharon Gibbs celebrate their promotions to chief warrant officer 3 during a ceremony in Baghdad Jan. 1. The married warrant officers serve with the 1st Armored Division and 3rd Corps Support Command respectively in Iraq and Kuwait.

Tax time again

Wiesbaden Army Airfield Tax Assistance Center gears up to provide free service

By Jolly Sienda
221st Base Support Battalion
Public Affairs Office

Now that Christmas is finished and the new year is in full swing, it's time to start thinking about filing 2003 taxes.

1st Lt. Robert Diaz of the Wiesbaden Legal Assistance Center is heading up the Tax Assistance Center which will be located in Building 1255 on Heer Strasse on the Wiesbaden Army Airfield, near the Shoppette.

"We are looking forward to opening our doors and offering our tax assistance services to the Wiesbaden military community," said Diaz.

The 1st Armored Division's Iron Tax Assistance Program offers tax return preparation and filing services to all holders of valid ID card holders in the Wiesbaden area free of charge.

"We will be able to handle ev-

erything from simple returns to more complex returns such as those involving issues related to ownership of rental property back in the States," said Diaz. "Just bring in your W-2, any other tax related forms you might receive in the mail, previous years' returns if you have them and any other documents you have that will help us prepare the return correctly. We'll do the rest for you."

"Our clients will need to bring a valid ID and their Social Security cards, if they can find them," said Diaz. "The free services that we offer can save our community members a significant amount of money."

The Tax Assistance Center will have trained tax preparers available, he said, but volunteers are needed to help out. "Volunteering does not require any specific tax-related experience — we will train you. All you need is the desire to help out."

The Tax Center will be open Jan. 31 to June 16, Monday through Friday, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. No appointment is needed, but Diaz did request that clients with more complicated returns call in advance to ensure tax preparers have enough time to devote to them.

For more information on the Tax Assistance Center or to inquire about volunteering, contact 1st Lt. Diaz at civ (0611) 705-4722 or by email at robert.diaz@hq.1ad.army.mil.

